

Message Text

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SUBJECT: CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATION--CASTRO URGES PATIENCE AND
COUNSELS NON-VIOLENCE

REFS (A) PANAMA 3388 (B) FBIS PANAMA 1222373 JUN 75

SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO MEMBER OF RECENT PANAMANIAN MISSION
TO CUBA, FIDEL CASTRO REPORTEDLY URGED PANAMA TO HAVE
PATIENCE ON CANAL ISSUE AND ADMONISHED TORRIJOS TO AVOID
VIOLENCE. THE CUBAN PRIME MINISTER STATED HE BELIEVES THE
PANAMA PROBLEM IS PRESENTLY MORE IMPORTANT TO U.S. THAN
THE CUBAN QUESTION. ON NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH U.S.,
CASTRO ASSERTED IT WAS UP TO U.S. TO TAKE THE NECESSARY
STEPS. END SUMMARY

1. FABIAN VELARDE, A MEMBER OF PANAMA'S RECENT SPECIAL
DIPLOMATIC MISSION TO CUBA (REF A), HAS WRITTEN AN ACCOUNT
OF HIS IMPRESSION OF CUBA AND PANAMANIAN'S JUNE 5 MEETING
WITH CASTRO FOR THE JUNE 12 EDITION OF GOP-CONTROLLED
MATUTINO. WITH EXCEPTION OF INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS,
TEXT OF VELARDE' ARTICLE HAS BEEN TRANSMITTED BY
FBIS (REF B). SEVERAL OF CASTRO'S REPORTED
COMMENTS ARE OF INTEREST, AND ARE REPEATED BELOW.

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2. ACCORDING TO VELARDE'S ACCOUNT, CASTRO STRESSED NEED FOR PANAMA TO MAINTAIN ITS PATIENCE ON THE CANAL QUESTION AND ADMINISHED TORRIJOS TO AVOID VIOLENCE. "YOU SHOULD NOT BE IN SUCH A HURRY," VELARDE QUOTED CASTRO. "II SAID FOUR YEARS AGO THAT THE POSITION OF PANAMA WOULD IMPROVE WITH TIME, AND IT HAS IMPROVED. THERE IS NO REASON FOR BECOMING IMPATIENT...GENERAL TORRIJOS MUST BE FIRM IN HIS CAUSE, BUT PATIENT. HE MUST NOT DISAPPOINT HIS PEOPLE OR THE PEOPLE OF THE ENTIRE AMERICAN CONTINENT. HE MUST AVOID VIOLENCE AND BLOODSHED. HE WOULD HAVE TO ANSWER TO HISTORY FOR OUR DEAD." AT ANOTHER POINT, VELARDE REPORTED CASTRO HAD NOTED THE IMPORTANCE OF AVOIDING HASTY REACTIONS TO PROVOCATIONS BECAUSE "WHEN A CAUSE HAS JUSTICE AND REASON, IT WILL TRIUMPH SOONER OR LATER." THE CANAL COULD NOT BE THE ONLY OBJECTIVE OF THE PANAMANIAN REVOLUTION, CASTRO OBSERVED, AND IN PANAMA, AS IN CUBA, THE GOVERNMENT HAD MUCH TO DO TO INCREASE PRODUCTION AND FURTHER THE PROGRESS OF THE PEOPLE.

3. SPEAKING OF RELATIVE IMPORTANCE TO U.S. OF PANAMA AND CUBAN PROBLEMS, VELARDE QUOTES CASTRO AS STATING: "THE PANAMA PROBLEM IS NOW MORE IMPORTANT FOR THE U.S. THAN THE CUBA PROBLEM. RIGHT NOW U.S. OFFICIALS ARE IMPATIENT ABOUT SOLVING THE PANAMA PROBLEM, A CAUSE WHICH IS BACKED BY ALL THE COUNTRIES THIS SITUATION IS FURTHER DISCREDITING THE U.S."

4. ASKED WHAT STEPS CUBA MIGHT BE PREPARED TO TAKE TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., CASTRO REPORTEDLY REPLIED: "WHAT STEPS CAN WE TAKE? WE HAVE TAKEN STEPS IN THE PAST SUCH AS THE HIJACKING AGREEMENT. IT IS THEY WHO ESTABLISHED THE BLOCKADE AND IT IS THEY WHO HAVE TAKEN ACTIONS AGAINST US. IT IS THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE STEPS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS". WHEN ASKED IF HE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN A VISIT BY SECRETARY KISSINGER, CASTRO WAS QUOTED AS "YES, LET SECRETARY KISSINGER, OR WHOEVER THE APPROPRIATE PERSON IS, COME. WE ARE WILLING TO TALK IN ORDER TO FIND SOLUTIONS, BUT LET THEM ALSO SHOW THEIR WILLINGNESS. HOW CAN WE HONESTLY HOLD

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DISCUSSIONS WITH THOSE WHO ARE BLOCKADING US? THEY MUST TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS."

5. THE CUBAN PRIME MINISTER ALSO HAD WARM WORDS OF PRAISE FOR GENERAL TORRIJOS. ASKED WHY HE APPEARED TO HAVE A SPECIAL RESPECT FOR TORRIJOS, CASTRO OFFERED FIVE REASONS: "FIRST, HE HAS GIVEN HIS COUNTRY THE FIRST GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE IN 70 YEARS; SECOND, HE HAS PUT

THE NATIONAL GUARD AT THE SERVICE OF THE PEOPLE;
THIRD, BECAUSE HE LIKES TO WORK WITH THE PEOPLE;
BECAUSE HE IS A SIMPLE MAN OF THE PEOPLE; FOURTH,
BECAUSE TORRIJOS IS A BRAVE MAN; AND FIFTH, BECAUSE HE
IS CARRYING OUT THE STRUGGLE INTELLIGENTLY AND BECAUSE
HE IS A VERY SENSITIVE MAN, A MAN OF FEELINGS."
JORDEN

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